UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/326
4 September 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
Item 21 (b) of the provisional agenda*

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Emergency assistance to the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 50/58 J of 22 December 1995 on emergency assistance to the Sudan, the General Assembly noted that despite progress made by Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), considerable relief needs still remained to be addressed, in particular in the areas of non-food assistance. The Assembly acknowledged the cooperation by the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations, including the agreements and arrangements achieved to facilitate relief operations through improvement of United Nations assistance to affected areas and encouraged the Government to continue its cooperation in that regard. The Assembly appealed to all parties concerned to continue to pursue dialogue and negotiations and to terminate hostilities, to allow the re-establishment of peace, order and stability, and also to facilitate relief efforts. It stressed the importance of assuring safe access for personnel providing relief assistance to all in need and urged all parties involved to continue to offer all feasible assistance, including the movement of relief supplies and personnel, so as to guarantee maximum success of OLS in all parts of the country.

2. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize and coordinate resources and support for OLS, to assess the emergency situation in the country and to report thereon, as well as on the recovery and rehabilitation of the country, to it at its fifty-first session. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

II. CURRENT SITUATION IN THE SUDAN

3. Since the last report of the Secretary-General on emergency assistance to the Sudan, the civil conflict has continued to destabilize and further degrade the lives of millions of Sudanese civilians. During the past 12 months, war-affected persons throughout the Sudan have struggled to cope with the effects of chronic malnutrition and an alarming increase in the spread of infectious diseases. The rapid deterioration of the economy during the second quarter of 1996 exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, putting intense pressure on millions of people already living below subsistence levels. Today, the coping mechanisms of populations at risk appear to be at the point of collapse, raising the prospect of widespread famine in food-deficit areas. The long-term consequences of the civil conflict, which in its most recent phase has raged unabated for 13 years, has destroyed vast sections of the country and will affect the Sudan for generations to come.

4. The humanitarian efforts of the United Nations, through OLS, were severely constrained throughout the last year by the Government of the Sudan's escalation of unilateral initiatives to control the flow of relief assistance. Beginning in the summer of 1995, the Government imposed unprecedented control over the type of equipment available to OLS, paralysing deliveries of food relief to populations in need. In effect, the Government's blanket denial to use a C-130 aircraft from 17 June 1995 until 15 July 1996 amounted to a breach of its obligations as a signatory to the March 1994 Agreement on Principles and Objectives of Humanitarian Assistance with the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) to allow access for the delivery of humanitarian

assistance. The Government justified its refusal by invoking its rights as a sovereign Government to control the airspace over its territory. By July 1996, the situation had deteriorated to the point that the ability of OLS to fulfil its mandate had become highly questionable.

5. By May 1996, the ban by the Government of the Sudan on large-capacity cargo aircraft, combined with restrictions on access, had reduced the logistical capacity of OLS cross-border operations to 20 per cent of projected food deliveries. By July, the World Food Programme (WFP) was able to deliver only 14 per cent of the food necessary to support populations at risk in war-affected areas served out of Lokichokio in northern Kenya. Denial of large-capacity aircraft during the "hunger gap" months between May and August 1996, when use of airstrips and roads is limited by rainy weather, resulted in increased malnutrition, especially in northern Bahr El-Ghazal and parts of Upper Nile and Jonglei, where insecurity due to military clashes had forced people to flee their homes and abandon their food stocks. A May 1996 nutritional assessment in Marial Bai in northern Bahr El-Ghazal by Médecins sans frontières-Belgium found 19 per cent global malnutrition among children under five and 2.8 per cent severe malnutrition. In the more stable Didinga area of Eastern Equatoria, by comparison, a nutritional assessment by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency reported a global malnutrition rate of 8 per cent.

6. In October 1995 the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement-Mainstream (SPLA/M-Mainstream) staged a major offensive against government positions along the Magwe corridor. After fierce fighting, SPLA commanders regained control over the strategic triangle between Parajok, Pageri and Magwe. In response, the Government imposed a total ban on all relief flights from 23 November until 7 December 1995. Between December 1995-February 1996 and again from May to July 1996, a no-fly zone was imposed by the Government over areas south of the Juba-Torit-Kapoeta and Juba-Yei-Kaya lines.

7. In retaliation, in the second quarter of 1996 rebel factions also began denying OLS access to certain destinations. OLS relief operations depend on guarantees of safe passage from all parties to the conflict. The retaliatory response of the rebels further constrained the ability of OLS to meet the needs of populations at risk in the conflict zones. SPLA restrictions too were in violation of the IGADD agreements to which it is a party.

8. Donor confidence in the ability of OLS to maintain access was severely tested at precisely the time when the assistance budgets of many donors were overextended. This resulted in a major shortfall in financial resources. By mid-August 1996, only 20.9 per cent of the $107.6 million requested by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat in the 1996 inter-agency consolidated appeal for the Sudan had been received. Several donors announced in 1995 the withholding of contributions pending the findings of the OLS review. The OLS review was commissioned by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the second half of 1995 to review the mandate, structure, coordination and modus operandi of OLS in the light of calls by the Government of the Sudan and southern factions for structural reforms.

9. The dynamics of the civil conflict resulted in splits and major realignments within the rebel movements. In April 1996, Riek Teny-Dhurgon, the

leader of the South Sudan Independence Army/Movement (SSIA/M) and a previously unrecognized group calling itself the Sudan People's Liberation Army/ Bahr El-Ghazal (SPLA-BEG), headed by Kerubino Kwanyin Bol, signed a "Political Charter" with the Government of the Sudan. In the months following the signing of the Charter, several SSIA commanders denounced Riak Machar's initiative with the Government and joined the SPLA. At the present time, it appears that one of the consequences of the Political Charter was an increase in hostilities between the signatories and SPLA-Mainstream led by John Garang de Maibior. It was clear that SPLA-Mainstream had emerged from the last two years of inter-factional fighting as the leading rebel organization.

10. The Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs to the Sudan, Ambassador Vieri Traxler, undertook two separate missions during the reporting period, one in November 1995 and the second in April 1996. The primary objective of both missions was to resume proximity talks between the parties to the conflict with the aim of improving the implementation of IGADD agreements of 1994 and 1996 on OLS corridors for relief supplies and humanitarian assistance to war-affected areas. Special emphasis was put on gaining access to SPLA-held locations in the Nuba Mountains that the Government had consistently cut off from humanitarian programmes. Although the Special Envoy received commitments from all the parties to attend talks, the new political environment resulting from developments in March-April (presidential and legislative elections in the Sudan; realignment of certain southern movements with the Government) prevented their actual resumption owing to the absence of recognized, legitimate interlocutors among the parties concerned.

11. Following the failure of the IGADD-sponsored efforts to find a solution to the conflict in the Sudan, there have been no subsequent initiatives. Relations became increasingly hostile between the Sudan and several neighbouring countries, specifically, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda, further limiting the possibilities for a revival of the IGADD framework (in March 1996, IGADD changed its name to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGADD). Accusations that the Sudan was involved in the assassination attempt on President Hosni Mubarak of the Arab Republic of Egypt in June 1995 in Addis Ababa contributed to the further isolation of the Government of the Sudan and led to the Security Council's adopting resolutions 1044 (1996) of 31 January and 1054 (1996) of 26 April, by which it imposed diplomatic sanctions against the Sudan, and resolution 1070 (1996) of 16 August on possible sanctions on the operations of Sudan Airways.

12. There were, however, some efforts at peace-building at the initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through a symposium on the culture of peace in Barcelona, Spain, in September 1995, and another in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, in May 1996. These informal gatherings brought together representatives from the Government of the Sudan, rebel movements and Sudanese civil society to discuss issues relating to national development and the resolution of the conflict. So far there has been no visible impact of these efforts on the actual position of the different parties to the conflict. In response to the recommendation of the Barcelona Declaration signed by the parties concerned, UNESCO intends to continue to step up its efforts to assist

in the peace process in the Sudan within the framework of its culture of peace programme.

13. The first independent review of OLS since it was launched in April 1989 began in late 1995. The review team completed its work in mid-August. The process of consultations with donors, relief agencies, the Government of the Sudan and SPLM is to be completed during September 1996. The final outcome of the process, along with the views of the concerned parties, agencies and the donor community will be made available by the middle of October.

III. EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND OPERATION LIFELINE SUDAN

A. General

14. Insecurity, denial of flight access to vulnerable areas and aircraft shortages represented the most serious constraints on the delivery of humanitarian relief assistance to southern Sudan. Despite these constraints, OLS substantially eased the effects of the conflict on civilian populations, delivering 27,737 tons of food between January and June 1996, of which 14,297 tons went to Government-held areas and 13,440 tons to SPLA-held areas, reaching 781,588 beneficiaries in the former and 1,092,624 in the latter. OLS also delivered 1,623 tons by air of non-food relief supplies to areas accessible from the OLS base in Lokichokio. OLS also supported rehabilitation programmes in the fields of health, household food security, livestock health, water and sanitation, emergency education, war-affected children and capacity-building.

15. As in the past, OLS continued to be supported through the Humanitarian Coordination Unit in Khartoum. The Unit was pivotal in collecting and disseminating information about the humanitarian crisis to donors, participating agencies and government counterparts. UNHCU also facilitated inter-agency operations and was responsible for monitoring the situation of displaced persons throughout the Sudan.

B. Political and military developments affecting humanitarian relief efforts

16. Throughout the period, relief and rehabilitation activities were severely disrupted by fighting or insecurity in areas where the most vulnerable populations live, especially northern Bahr El-Ghazal, parts of Jonglei, eastern Upper Nile and Eastern Equatoria. Major developments included the following.

Bahr El-Ghazal

17. Militia activity in northern Bahr El-Ghazal - attributed in large part to the group headed by Kerubino Kwanyin Bol - continued to disrupt relief operations seriously throughout 1995-1996, causing the evacuation of relief personnel on 27 occasions during the first two quarters of 1996. Raiding by militia destroyed close to three quarters of the region's grain stores and resulted in the displacement of more than 40,000 people. A series of cattle raids and attacks on civilians occurred in Tonj and Yirol counties in March and

April 1996. OLS reported that 90 civilians had been killed, 45 seriously wounded and 33 abducted during six attacks. By the end of June, a serious deterioration in the nutritional status of war-affected populations was reported in parts of Bahr El-Ghazal, including Alek, Wunrok and Akon counties, and among displaced populations in Turalei, Thiek Thou and Gogrial counties.

Upper Nile/Jonglei

18. From August 1995, heavy fighting between two factions of the SSIA seriously interrupted relief operations in the Akobo, Ayod, Maiwut, Waat and Yuai areas. Fighting erupted less than two weeks after a press statement was issued in Nairobi announcing that SSIM leader Riak Machar had been overthrown and a new executive committee formed. The original SSIM leadership denounced the statement, effectively ending prospects for reconciliation which had been created with the signing of the Lafon Declaration in April 1995 between the SPLM and SSIM. In April 1996, the SPLM and the breakaway SSIM faction, known as SSIM-Unity Forces, signed a declaration of political and military reunification. Since August 1995, control of disputed locations in Upper Nile/Jonglei has changed frequently from one faction to another, forcing relief efforts to be conducted within an extremely constrained operational framework. In April 1996, an agreement (the so-called "Political Charter") was signed by SSIM and the Government of the Sudan (and Kerubino Kwanyin Bol) as a prelude to further negotiations. By the end of June, SSIM had regained control of most of its former territory including Akobo, Ayod, Waat and Yuai.

Eastern Equatoria

19. Despite a major offensive by the SPLA against government positions south of Juba, relief activities continued in the large displaced camps on the southern border with Uganda. However, the activities of Ugandan rebel groups severely disrupted relief convoys from Uganda to the displaced camps at Labone (32,170 displaced), Mughale (40,000), Bamurye (17,000), Mangalatore (10,000) and Kerwa (1,500). Landmines and ambush attacks remain a constant threat to relief personnel using these roads, which are frequently closed as a result. In June rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army shot dead a Catholic Relief Services convoy leader en route to Labone; the driver of a Norwegian Church Aid health team vehicle had one foot amputated following a landmine blast on the same road.

20. In western Uganda, the activities of the West Bank Nile Front similarly disrupted the delivery of relief supplies by road to the Mangalatore/Bamurye camps in southern Sudan. An OLS non-governmental organization, the American Refugee Committee, temporarily evacuated all relief staff to Arua in Uganda in early June. The disruptions worsened humanitarian conditions in the camps. A March 1996 rapid nutritional survey in Mangalatore camp by Médecins sans frontières-Netherlands (based in Uganda) showed that global malnutrition among children under five had risen to 15 per cent, up from 9.3 per cent in July 1995. UNICEF has been distributing dry rations of supplementary food in the camp. Children requiring intensive feeding are being referred to the in-patient department of the American Refugee Committee clinic.

Flight restrictions

21. Over the last one year, the Government of the Sudan has continued to limit the number of relief flights from Lokichokio to specific relief bases in SPLM-controlled areas. Since mid-1995, OLS has consistently been denied flight access to an average of 12 key locations per month. For the first time, the Government also demanded that certain SPLM-controlled locations be accessed only from Khartoum. This demand was not accepted by OLS. Government flight restrictions reduced the Operation's ability to assess and respond to urgent humanitarian needs. During the outbreak of cholera and severe diarrhoea in the second quarter of 1996, OLS was unable to access the majority of affected areas because of government flight restrictions. More than 1,800 people died during the outbreak, which could have been effectively contained had restrictions been lifted when requested.

22. In Akobo, which was denied flight access during the month of June, 11 deaths from diarrhoea disease were reported. Despite repeated requests, the Government refused to grant emergency clearance. On 27 June, after Akobo was recaptured by SSIA forces, the Government granted clearance for July. Flight access to Akobo was also denied for the months of January, February, April and May 1996, which seriously disrupted non-governmental organization medical services, including a 90-bed hospital with 5,000 out-patients per month, a tuberculosis treatment programme and medical outreach services to remote areas in Jonglei province.

23. In June, severe flooding was reported in the area of Pochalla, a village the SPLA recaptured from the Government of the Sudan in March 1996 and to which OLS was denied access from April onwards. Following reports that the flooding had displaced more than 15,000 people and destroyed food crops, OLS made an emergency request for flight access to Pochalla and permission to use a C-130 Hercules aircraft for food airdrops. Despite repeated requests, the Government continued to deny clearance. Eventually, only after the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of WFP went public on the situation, did the Government respond positively to a request from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and agree, on 8 August, to OLS flights to Pochalla.

24. The continued denial of access since 1992 to Pariang/Panaru, an area badly affected by kala-azar epidemics, contributed to a large number of deaths in the area. Médecins sans frontières-Netherlands has treated approximately 22,000 kala-azar cases since 1989, mainly in western Upper Nile. Kala-azar is almost always fatal if untreated, but has at least a 90 per cent recovery rate when treated. However, as a result of the Government's flight restrictions, no kala-azar treatments or other OLS health interventions were possible in the Pariang area.

25. On 23 November 1995, the Government suspended all flights to southern Sudan, in response to increased SPLA military activity. The suspension lasted approximately two weeks and seriously impaired relief activities throughout the country before it was revoked by the Government. In a press statement of 4 December 1995, the Secretary-General expressed his regret over the initial decision of the Government and called upon all parties involved to take the

necessary steps to allow access to the innocent victims of the conflict under the agreed OLS principles and operational procedures.

26. During much of 1996, both the SPLM and SSIM have frequently denied clearance to OLS flights from Lokichokio, primarily to contested locations in Jonglei and eastern Upper Nile. In addition, the SPLM has denied access to Gogrial in Bahr El-Ghazal since January 1996 and to Pibor in Jonglei since April. In March, SSIM notified OLS that access was denied to 13 locations in Jonglei and eastern Upper Nile. The restriction lasted three days. The denial of flight clearance forced WFP to interrupt its airlift to Gogrial of 48.5 tons of food for 8,000 beneficiaries after having delivered only 12.6 tons. This interruption contributed to a rise in malnutrition among the war-affected populations in the area. In June 1996 health and nutrition programmes in Gogrial were also interrupted after the SPLM denied UNICEF flight clearance.

Security incidents affecting relief personnel

27. In 1995, more than 40 evacuations of relief personnel occurred from locations served by OLS southern sector. During the first two quarters of 1996, 158 personnel were evacuated from 35 locations. In addition, four hostage situations occurred including:

(a) In September-October 1995 a Médecins sans frontières-Belgium logistician was abducted during a surprise attack on Panthou in northern Bahr El-Ghazal by Kerubino's forces and held for more than five weeks before being released through GOS officials in Khartoum;

(b) In December 1995-January 1996 a Sudanese employee of Médecins sans frontières-Belgium was taken from Ajiep by Kerubino's forces and forced to porter loot. He was released after two weeks;

(c) In March 1996 a WFP barge with two international staff and 11 Sudanese staff was held near Doleib Hill for two days while an unknown group of armed militia looted 50 tons of sorghum and oil and stripped the barge of equipment and personal effects;

(d) In May 1996 a priest working with an OLS member organization, Diocese of Torit, was captured during an ambush by the Lord's Resistance Army on the Kitgum-Labone road in northern Uganda. The priest was released after two days and a local staff member accompanying him was released about three weeks later. Another two local staff remained missing as at 20 August 1996.

28. In a statement issued on 1 March 1996, the Secretary-General expressed grave concern over the 17 February bombing by government aircraft of airstrips in Paluer and Akuer during relief operations. The Secretary-General stated that the incidents constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law and asked the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to take appropriate measures to seek clarification from the Government of the Sudan, as well as their assurance that such actions would not be renewed. To date, there has been no response from the Government.

29. Again on 15 July 1996, a government aircraft bombed Maridi, in southern Sudan, with one bomb landing in the immediate vicinity of a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) compound. Two people were killed instantly and 23 persons were seriously wounded.

C. Internally displaced persons

30. Of the war-affected populations in the Sudan, the internally displaced continued to represent one of the most pressing and volatile humanitarian issues related to the conflict in the south. The United Nations estimates the number of displaced persons in the Sudan at 2.2 million. Of these, 1.8 million are situated in the Khartoum area; 400,000 live in settlements in the transitional zone and the south. Many of the long-term displaced have self-settled and are not considered at risk. By the end of July 1996, WFP had delivered 8,164 tons of food to 185,000 displaced persons in Khartoum.

31. In general, the conditions facing displaced persons living in the transitional zone and the south remained unchanged. In Khartoum, however, a combination of access restrictions and forced evictions and demolitions put thousands of persons already living below subsistence levels at greater risk.

32. Between August 1995 and June 1996, more than seven demolitions by the Government occurred in squatter settlements in greater Khartoum. More than 15,000 displaced persons lost their homes during these operations, which usually occurred without prior warning. The majority of newly dispossessed were offered no alternative sites by the Government, although some were relocated to one of its four official displaced person camps.

33. The Government justifies its policy of forced evictions on the grounds that they constitute part of its urban renewal programme. During the reporting period, government officials did little to improve the appalling living conditions found in the official displaced person camps nor did they take steps to provide secure land tenure for the displaced. In the absence of any publicly funded infrastructure in squatter areas and displaced camps, the role of non-governmental organizations is crucial for providing basic services. However, the Government continued to obstruct their access to the camps and settlements. In late June, after a joint démarche by the donor community, international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations, the Government expanded access to the Khartoum camps.

D. Non-governmental organizations

34. In the latter half of 1995, a new Commissioner of the Commission of Voluntary Agencies was appointed. For the first time in several years, international non-governmental organizations were given access to areas previously off limits, including locations in south and south-west Kordofan. In the second quarter of 1996, when the Commission was incorporated into the new Humanitarian Aid Commission, bureaucratic obstacles once again interfered with non-governmental organization operations, in some cases causing serious delays in applications for new projects. In general, government restrictions continued

to restrict non-governmental organization operations throughout the period. Despite repeated appeals by international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Coordinator for Emergency and Relief Operations, the Government of the Sudan continued to require visitor permits for all international personnel working in the Khartoum displaced camps. This measure was eased only towards the end of the reporting period. Khartoum-based non-governmental organizations were also required to obtain travel permits to access locations in the transitional zone and the south. Virtually all international non-governmental organizations experienced delays of up to two months in obtaining permits, seriously hindering implementation of humanitarian programmes.

35. The Government continued to thwart non-governmental organization efforts in the south, especially in Bahr El-Ghazal and Jonglei, to re-establish basic health services in war-affected areas. During the first half of 1996, flight restrictions forced Médecins sans frontières-Belgium to access flood and diarrhoea-affected victims in Akobo through Nyandit, 20 kilometres away. Similar flight restrictions obstructed other non-governmental organizations, including German Agro Action, which was unable to deliver seeds and tools to Yomciir at the peak of the planting season, and Christian Mission Aid, which was stranded in Boma while conducting accelerated guinea worm eradication. Non-governmental organizations servicing populations in north-east Bahr El-Ghazal were forced to change their operating sites continuously because of flight restrictions and persistent insecurity.

E. Relief food assistance

36. As a result of the OLS annual assessment mission conducted in September-October 1995 and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/WFP joint crop and food supply mission of November-December 1995, it was estimated that approximately 2.1 million displaced and war-affected persons in the south, in the transitional zone and in Khartoum (1 million in Government-held areas and 1.1 million in the SPLA-held areas) would require food aid during 1996. The assessments also recommended that contingency stocks be secured for an additional 215,000 persons in case of emergencies.

37. The number of beneficiaries slated to receive assistance during 1996 increased by 900,000 persons to 2.1 million, a 58 per cent increase over 1995, when 1.2 million persons required assistance. The combination of limited arable land in the south, localized drought in Equatoria, excessive flooding in Bahr El-Ghazal and insect infestation in western Sudan accounted for the increase in the number of beneficiaries. Fighting and insecurity considerably increased food needs in parts of northern Bahr El-Ghazal - where militia raids destroyed up to three quarters of grain stores - and Upper Nile/Jonglei, where fighting forced people to flee from their homes, abandoning their food stocks and losing access to their traditional grazing and fishing areas.

38. The total amount of food aid projected for delivery in 1996 is 61,400 tons. Carry-over stocks from 1995 have been estimated at 33,944 tons. Whereas no additional food contributions were required in 1995 because of significant carry-over stocks, 27,456 tons will be necessary for 1996. Of the total food

aid requirements, 39,970 tons are planned for delivery from the northern sector and 21,430 tons from the southern sector. Approximately 60 per cent of northern sector deliveries are projected for road transport, 35 per cent by barge and 5 per cent by air. In the southern sector, an estimated 16 per cent will be delivered by road, mainly into eastern Equatoria, and 84 per cent will be delivered by airlift and airdrop.

39. By the end of June 1996, WFP had delivered 13,300 tons of food assistance to 820,150 targeted beneficiaries, of which 10,986 tons were delivered in the northern sector and 2,314 tons in the southern sector. Northern sector non-governmental organizations delivered 6,850 tons, mainly to the Khartoum displaced, while southern sector OLS non-governmental organizations delivered 7,586 tons by road.

40. WFP completed four barge convoys during the first half of 1996. The first convoy delivered 311 metric tons of food to 42,000 beneficiaries along the Canal-Obel-Nagdiar corridor. The second convoy delivered 1,356 tons to 94,500 beneficiaries along the Renk-Malakal corridor and the third convoy delivered 1,200 tons of food to 174,700 beneficiaries along the Tonga-Fanjak corridor. The fourth convoy delivered 3,281 tons of food to 380,400 beneficiaries along the Juba corridor.

41. Government authorities delayed the departure of the fourth WFP convoy to Juba for two months, between April and June, refusing to grant clearance despite repeated requests. Clearance was finally granted on 3 June and the convoy, loaded with 3,281 tons for 380,400 beneficiaries, departed Malakal on 5 June. Government authorities also hindered the operation of relief trains by refusing to keep rail corridors free of military activity during the two weeks preceding the train's departure. As a direct result of the Government's intransigence, no relief trains delivered food aid during the period.

42. During the second quarter of 1996, rebel factions began denying clearances for air deliveries to government-held locations. Specific and repeated requests were made to rebel factions throughout the second quarter for air deliveries of food to areas suffering severe food deficits, including Gogrial, Yirol, Tonj, and Pibor. As has been the case in previous years, WFP did not encounter problems in securing air clearances from the rebel factions for assessment purposes.

43. The potential for a poor harvest during 1996 is a matter of serious concern. A combination of factors, including the increasingly limited capacity of financial lending institutions, fuel shortages, low in-country stocks of farm machinery spare parts, and low in-country seed stocks, could have a potentially devastating impact on agricultural production. In addition, tracts of land along the Eritrean and Ethiopian borders, for example, in Pochalla, will not be planted in 1996 because of insecurity and flooding.

44. During the summer, data on market forces indicated that in-country cereal stocks (notably sorghum) were low. In Gederaf state, sorghum prices increased by approximately 44 per cent during June. Inflation rates of 140 per cent during the second quarter of 1996 also put pressure on food prices.

45. At the end of the reporting period, WFP was faced with alarmingly low food stocks. The depletion of stocks jeopardizes its ability to maintain current programming and its capacity to provide rapid assistance in the case of unplanned emergencies. Given the precarious security situation in traditionally food deficit areas, the country's deepening economic crisis as well as the potential for a poor 1996 harvest, it is likely that previously unforeseen emergencies will occur in the upcoming months. Thus far, only $8.6 million out of the required $40,279,157 million requested by WFP in the 1996 United Nations appeal has been pledged or committed. Without immediate donor funding, WFP will be forced to reduce its assistance to war-affected populations, thereby placing targeted beneficiaries at even greater risk. In her press statement of 11 July 1996, the Executive Director of WFP estimated that 700,000 persons were at risk of starvation due to the Government's restrictions on the use of OLS C-130 aircraft.

F. Non-food assistance

1. Health

46. Diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and acute respiratory infections remained the major causes of mortality and morbidity in southern Sudan, the transitional zone and among the Khartoum displaced. Between April and the end of June, widespread outbreaks of acute diarrhoeal disease and cholera killed an estimated 1,852 throughout the Sudan.

47. OLS health officers have set up local education teams to raise awareness about these diseases and improve treatment and prevention. Each village in high-risk areas has assigned a volunteer to actively seek and respond to cases, and to report them to Federal Ministry of Health, Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation or the Relief Association of South Sudan coordinators and relevant non-governmental organizations. Médecins sans frontières-Netherlands coordinated the OLS southern sector response in western Upper Nile and collected and disseminated information about the spread of the disease throughout southern Sudan. UNICEF/OLS provided oral rehydration salts, ringer lactate, water containers, logistics and coordination assistance.

48. OLS southern sector established new guidelines on the use of chloroquine and antibiotics to improve diagnosis and treatment of malaria and acute respiratory infections. These drugs, and other essential medical supplies such as mosquito nets, were distributed by UNICEF to non-governmental organization health facilities.

49. UNICEF continued its focus on immunization against measles as a critical health intervention for children. In 1995, 109,482 children received measles vaccination and vitamin A doses throughout the south and the transitional zone. Five measles outbreaks were reported between July 1995 and June 1996 throughout the south and the transitional zone. More than 200 deaths were estimated among 1,250 cases reported in southern Kordofan between July and September 1995.

50. A special National Immunization Days Polio Campaign, launched by the Federal Ministry of Health, took place in April and June, covering most parts of

the government-held areas, including accessible locations in the transitional zone and the south.

51. Médecins sans frontières-Netherlands treated approximately 800 new kala-azar patients and 700 post-kala-azar, or relapses, in western Upper Nile in 1995. Future plans for the control of kala-azar include the development of a cheaper treatment regimen and the trial use of a vaccine.

52. Southern Sudan accounts for 80 per cent of the world's cases of guinea worm disease according to WHO. UNICEF continued to support international and indigenous non-governmental organizations, the Federal Ministry of Health, Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association and the Relief Association of South Sudan working in southern Sudan to treat and prevent the painful and debilitating affliction. These groups were joined last year by Global 2000, which provided resource training and technical support in close collaboration with UNICEF and non-governmental organizations. During 1996 the number of villages identified as endemic reached 3,571 with more than 25,000 new cases found.

53. River blindness interventions were conducted jointly by the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, OLS non-governmental organizations, UNICEF and Global 2000. The programme was initially coordinated by Médecins sans frontières-Belgium and later transferred to HealthNet International.

54. The International Medical Corps introduced the testing for HIV/AIDS in Tambura, where one third of tuberculosis patients were found to be HIV positive. Work also began in Eastern Equatoria to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS among communities along the southern borders with Kenya and Uganda. OLS non-governmental organizations continued to administer centralized treatment programmes to tuberculosis patients in key endemic areas.

55. In mid-1996, UNICEF/OLS southern sector was providing 240 health kits each month to health centres run by OLS non-governmental organizations, up from 130 per month at the end of 1995. This increase was achieved, despite access difficulties, through the use of short-term mobile teams in insecure areas and improved outreach in more stable areas. In insecure areas, refresher training courses were set up beside bush airstrips so that teams could leave quickly if necessary. UNICEF Khartoum continued to provide essential drugs for over 20 different non-governmental organizations, including distribution of over 1,350 drug kits to 190 health facilities in government-held areas during 1995.

56. Working closely with Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association and the Relief Association of South Sudan, UNICEF remained responsible for coordination among 25 health non-governmental organizations working in OLS southern sector. Quarterly meetings were organized to provide forums for progress reviews, prioritization of inputs and standardization of implementation approaches. In 1996, the programme aims to reach an estimated 1.7 million people with basic health care services. In the first half of the year, UNICEF and OLS non-governmental organizations held a variety of health training courses, including training for maternal child health workers and traditional birth attendants.

2. Household food security

Seed and tools

57. OLS distributed 1,075 tons of seed and 143,000 hand tools in 1996 to assist over 135,000 households in 114 locations. OLS northern sector supported local blacksmith production of 18,700 hand tools specified to locally appropriate criteria. A total of 83 tons of seed were bartered from farmers in Maridi and Leer for use in seed-deficient areas. The seed swap programme reduced dependency on imported seed and increased production of local seeds.

58. OLS southern sector designed a training package for women that promoted improved agricultural practices. OLS northern sector conducted intensive training of trainers in Juba with the aim of enhancing local capacities for setting food security priorities and establishing a standardized monitoring system.

59. Delays in the distribution of seed and tools, caused by late purchase and delivery, insecurity, flight restrictions and aircraft shortages, resulted in late planting in some areas. Reduced yields are expected in these locations in the 1996 September-October harvest. However, in areas of late planting, it is likely that harvests will continue through to the end of October. In addition, weather conditions in the second quarter of 1996 resulted in early crop losses in some areas through flooding and drought.

Livestock health

60. Community-based animal health workers continued to vaccinate cattle against rinderpest - a major cattle-killing disease - and treat other major livestock diseases of the south: contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia, trypanosomiasis, liver fluke, anthrax and haemorrhagic septicaemia. Communities paid for the treatments in cash or kind, and the revenue was used to fund community projects, including school building, school gardens, well-digging and construction of stores. In 1996, UNICEF and 10 non-governmental organizations working in livestock facilitated training for about 15 community animal health workers per month.

61. UNICEF Khartoum launched a rinderpest eradication project. The livestock programme also assisted OLS child immunization activities by sharing cold chain equipment and transport in cattle camps. During the reporting period, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations distributed 237,000 spools for net-making and 5.3 million fishing hooks, which benefited an estimated 155,000 households living near rivers, lakes and ponds. White jinja cloth for mosquito nets was also distributed to help prevent malaria in high-risk areas.

3. Emergency education

62. OLS-southern sector provided basic education materials for 1,200 primary schools serving 300,000 children. UNICEF, Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, the Relief Association of South Sudan and 11 non-governmental organizations continued teacher training. An additional 1,600 Sudanese primary

schoolteachers will be trained. This represents a 25 per cent increase over 1995. Two education workshops were held for education coordinators and school supervisors focusing on curriculum and administration. Six hundred selected primary schools received school garden kits containing seeds for vegetables and staple foods and handtools for planting. OLS northern sector education programme distributed basic education materials and text books, conducted teacher training and supported class room rehabilitation.

4. Children in especially difficult circumstances

63. UNICEF continued its educational support to more than 3,000 unaccompanied children living in accessible camps in Eastern Equatoria. Twenty-six basic education kits were distributed to schools in the camps. UNICEF and Rädda Barnen began a follow-up programme for children reunited with their families in western Upper Nile. Emphasis was placed on community-based mental health care strategies for children suffering from war trauma. The project has interviewed 340 of the 1,233 children who have been reunited since 1992. A United Nations/non-governmental organization network for children in especially difficult circumstances was formed in June 1996 to focus on issues of unaccompanied children, family tracing and reunification, and child protection in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Sudanese Government had ratified in August 1990. The two main southern factions have formally agreed to abide by the principles contained in the Convention, though, as they are not Governments, they cannot sign it. UNICEF northern sector trained state-level coordinators for children in especially difficult circumstances. The Ministry of Social Planning signed an agreement allowing several international non-governmental organizations to initiate a pilot child/family tracing/reunification project for 200 boys from Abu Doum camp, located just north of Khartoum.

5. Gender and development

64. UNICEF continued to emphasize the inclusion of a gender component in teacher training and to recruit female teachers. Initial UNICEF support to women's groups, followed up by other non-governmental organizations, focused on income-generating projects. During the second half of 1996, two regional gender sensitization workshops will be held in southern Sudan to develop strategies for integrating gender issues into all programme activities. A gender network of OLS non-governmental organizations was established and met in July 1996. UNICEF southern sector provided 15 women's groups with material to make school uniforms for 20,000 children.

6. Water and sanitation

65. The OLS water programme continued to focus on the repair and maintenance of existing water pumps and boreholes. The programme repaired a total of 852 hand pumps and drilled 109 new boreholes. In addition, over 1,100 household latrines were constructed in northern sector locations and more than 100 new village health committees formed, including 18 among the displaced in Khartoum camps.

In northern Bahr El-Ghazal, Save the Children-UK continued to support four hand-drilling teams, and other agencies are considering support of similar projects in Bahr El-Ghazal, Upper Nile and Jonglei. An OLS non-governmental organization, MEDAIR, is providing a hand-drill to their locally trained teams to achieve better outreach to surrounding villages. Efforts continued to ensure that water supply management and hygiene awareness are incorporated into primary health care coverage. UNICEF/OLS southern sector trained counterpart personnel in all aspects of water management.

7. Capacity-building

66. The UNICEF capacity-building programme continued to emphasize training, funding, and advocacy for OLS counterparts. Training sessions were held for staff of Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, the Relief Association of South Sudan and Sudanese non-governmental organizations. As a result of the training, effective action plans for 1996 were produced by Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, UNICEF provided specialized training in programme and financial management for technical officers in Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association and the Relief Association of South Sudan. UNICEF organized a workshop in June 1995 on capacity-building in indigenous agencies.

67. UNICEF northern sector workshops on capacity-building resulted in initiatives in health, nutrition and water and sanitation. Plans of action detailing the needs and respective contributions of partner non-governmental organizations were proposed. Achievements in capacity-building over the period included training of traditional birth attendants, identification and training of regional Federal Ministry of Health nutrition focal points, formation of village health committees and village volunteers for guinea worm control and surveillance, establishment of oral rehydration therapy corners in health facilities and implementation of mobile outreach activities to remote locations within the WHO Extended Programme of Immunization.

8. Emergency relief and shelter

68. Relief and shelter items were distributed to populations displaced by fighting, notably in Mankien, Manajang, New Cush, Mangalatore, Lafon and Labone. Special efforts were made to reach displaced populations in Upper Nile locations, including, Baliet, Nasir, Abwong, Mading and Pagok. Plastic sheeting, buckets, soap, blankets, mosquito netting and salt were stocked in strategic locations. Relief kits consisting of fishing equipment, cooking pots, a bucket, a blanket and mosquito netting were distributed by the Save the Children Fund-UK in Bahr El-Ghazel, Jonglei and Lakes. UNICEF pre-positioned emergency relief items in Lokichokio to assist an estimated 15,000 people affected by flooding in the Pochalla area in June 1996, but government restrictions on access and the use of the C-130 aircraft prevented their distribution at the time.

69. In August 1996, after OLS received government clearance for relief flights, UNICEF delivered more than 8 tons of UNICEF and Médecins sans frontières-supplied emergency relief items, including medicines, oral rehydration salts,

water containers, blankets and high-energy biscuits. WFP delivered some 83 tons of emergency relief food for the affected population in five airdrops from the Lokichokio-based C-130 Hercules aircraft. At the end of August, OLS assessments of the scale and duration of emergency relief requirements were still under way in the Pochalla area.

9. Barge outreach activities

70. UNICEF deployed mobile technical teams on all WFP barge missions. Programme interventions included measles/polio/tetanus vaccinations, basic outpatient services, supply of essential drugs, rapid nutritional assessments, distribution of guinea worm filters, provision of emergency education kits and delivery of seed, agricultural handtools and fishing equipment. Despite long delays associated with clearance approvals, more than 100,000 households benefited.

10. Humanitarian principles

71. UNICEF southern sector continued to press for the renegotiation of a new set of ground rules upon which to base the relationship between OLS agencies and the two main southern factions, the SPLM and SSIM. In mid-1995, the leaders of the two movements endorsed the new ground rules, which contained specific references for respecting and upholding the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Geneva Conventions and a set of principles governing humanitarian assistance, including neutrality, impartiality, accountability to beneficiaries and the right to offer and receive assistance. From mid-1995, UNICEF began an intensive education campaign targeting civil and military authorities, traditional leaders, Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association and the Relief Association of South Sudan, community leaders and relief personnel. The campaign reached approximately 3,500 people in 1995, with workshops in 20 locations. During the first two quarters of 1996, UNICEF held more than 10 workshops in southern Sudan, reaching an estimated 2,000 people, including a workshop in Nairobi in May with 25 participants from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and the donor community.

11. Nutrition

72. Surveys in 1996 indicated deteriorating nutritional conditions in numerous areas, particularly northern Bahr El-Ghazal, Upper Nile and Jonglei. The combined effects of conflict and displacement led to an increase in diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and acute respiratory infections. WFP continued to provide supplementary rations for non-governmental organization feeding centres during the period although nutritional activities were severely hampered by repeated evacuations of relief personnel. OLS agencies have raised their grave concerns with the Government and the donor community about the nutritional condition of children in remote areas. UNICEF continued to support children in supplementary feeding programmes where the rate of global malnutrition had reached as high as 25 per cent, for example, in Narus, Labone and Nimule. A total of 10,000

children in 77 locations and 4,000 pregnant and lactating mothers received assistance.

12. Operations and logistics

73. Despite international efforts to repair and upgrade roads, air transport remained a necessity for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In 1995, UNICEF aircraft transported 2,500 tons of non-food cargo from Lokichokio into southern Sudan, and more than 8,800 passengers for 45 United Nations and non-governmental organization relief agencies. Carry over cargo for 1996 totalled 750 tons. By June 1996, UNICEF had moved 1,623 tons including the bulk of the seed and tool requirements for the year.

74. The UNICEF Twin Otter - the only United Nations aircraft permanently operating from Khartoum - was used throughout the period to ferry supplies and technical assistance to remote areas for life-saving interventions. A total of 790 tons of non-food supplies were transported by air from Khartoum to southern Sudan during the first half of 1996. UNICEF delivered an additional 1,000 tons of non-food cargo overland and 250 tons by barge during the same period.

75. UNICEF southern sector continued to fund the Lokichokio relief base, which provided accommodation and catering services for the OLS/United Nations/ non-governmental organization/donor and counterpart community. The base camp operated near full capacity for the period, accommodating an average of 120 relief personnel each night. A full-time security officer monitored all locations served by OLS. Regular training courses were offered to relief personnel on basic security precautions and actions.

G. Assistance to refugees

76. As recommended by the inter-disciplinary mission to the Sudan in March 1995, a census of refugees living in official settlements and camps in the eastern and central states was conducted between 23 March and 8 April 1996. The census was a collaborative effort between the Commissioner for Refugees, WFP and UNHCR.

77. Registration was conducted in all refugee camps and settlements in eastern and central Sudan. According to the census, 148,374 Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees live in UNHCR-assisted camps and settlements in Gezira, Sinnar, Gederaf and Kassala. Because of persistent insecurity, registration was postponed in the Red Sea state. Using the fourth Sudan national population census conducted in 1993 as a baseline, UNHCR calculates that 278,852 non-assisted refugees of Eritrean, Ethiopian, Ugandan, Zairian and Somali origins are living in urban areas throughout the country. In addition, 4,400 Chadian refugees have sought safety in western Darfur. The total number of assisted and non-assisted refugees residing in the Sudan at the end of the reporting period was 431,626.

78. UNHCR successfully completed its Eritrean voluntary repatriation pilot project in May 1995. No further repatriation of Eritrean refugees occurred during the period owing to strained political relations between the Governments

of Eritrea and the Sudan. The Government of the Sudan has indicated its desire for a tripartite agreement for the repatriation. The Government of Eritrea, however, remains strongly opposed to such an approach, preferring instead to base the repatriation on separate bilateral agreements between UNHCR and the participating Governments. Spontaneous repatriation continued throughout the reporting period. According to the Eritrean Relief and Refugees Commission, 80,437 Eritrean refugees repatriated spontaneously from the Sudan during 1995.

79. Since 1993, when voluntary repatriation of Ethiopian refugees began, a total of 56,646 Ethiopians have been assisted by UNHCR with their return to various destinations in Ethiopia. Ninety per cent of the returnees repatriated to Tigray National Regional State (Region 1) and to Amhara National Regional State (Region 3). The remaining 10 per cent returned to Oromo National Regional State (Region 4) and Addis Ababa. Between 15 December 1995 and 30 June 1996, 27,204 Ethiopian refugees were assisted by UNHCR with repatriation to Ethiopia in 36 organized convoys. It is expected that 4,000 urban refugees will be repatriated to Ethiopia before land routes close at the onset of the 1996 rainy season.

80. After a year-long delay, the voluntary repatriation of Zairians from the Sudan began on 1 June 1996. The programme will airlift 457 Zairian refugees to Kisangani, Isiro and Buta in Zaire. By 30 June 1996, 168 Zairian refugees had been voluntarily repatriated to Kisangani (102) and Isiro (66).

IV. ACTION TAKEN BY MEMBER STATES

81. In addition to the activities described above, several Member States have provided information on action taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/58 J.

Cyprus

82. Cyprus contributed $1,000 to requirements set forth in the 1996 United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for the Sudan.

Denmark

83. For 1996, Danish humanitarian assistance to the Sudan totalled DKr 20 million allotted to international non-governmental organizations (Danchurchaid, Danish Red Cross and Save the Children).

Finland

84. As at 30 June 1996, Finland has contributed Fmk 2.6 million for humanitarian assistance to the Sudan, of which Fmk 1.1 million were donated to the Finnish Red Cross/ICRC and Fmk 1.5 million to WFP.

Germany

85. The Government of Germany contributed DM 2,221,967 for refugee programmes in 1996, of which DM 471,967 were donated to the Gesellshaft für Technische

Zusammenarbeit, DM 800,000 to UNFPA and DM 950,000 to the Catholic Centre for Foreign Aid.

Italy

86. For 1996, the Government of Italy projects at Lit 2.6 billion its contribution for humanitarian interventions in the Sudan in favour of Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda.

Japan

87. Assistance provided by the Government of Japan to the Sudan in 1996 is as follows: ¥4,800,000 to Japanese non-governmental organizations, SwF 400,000 to ICRC, $690,000 to UNICEF, $6,420,000 to WFP and an unspecified portion of $2,940,000 allocated to WFP relief activities in Ethiopia and Somalia, in addition to the Sudan.

Liechtenstein

88. The Government of Liechtenstein has contributed SwF 10,000 to requirements set forth in the 1996 United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for the Sudan.

Norway

89. The Government of Norway contributed Nkr 32,686,885 to various food and non-food assistance programmes relating to humanitarian efforts in the Sudan. This assistance was channelled through programmes undertaken by the following organizations: Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Christian Michelsen Institute, Inter-Africa Group, Médecins sans frontières-Oslo, Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Red Cross and WFP.

Switzerland

90. For 1996, the Government of Switzerland committed a total of SwF 4.3 million for humanitarian activities in the Sudan. Contributions were channelled primarily through operational partners, notably ICRC and UNICEF. In the case of UNICEF, Swiss Government contributions were in support of water and health programmes and in the form of four Swiss disaster relief specialists in the fields of hydrogeology and logistics.

V. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

91. In April 1989, to address the humanitarian dimension of the ongoing civil war in the Sudan, the United Nations, certain international non-governmental organizations, the Government of the Sudan and the rebel movements agreed on the right to access to affected populations by United Nations organizations on the basis of the principles of neutrality, impartiality and transparency. Consequently, Operation Lifeline Sudan was launched in April 1989 to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by the civil war.

92. At the time of its inception, OLS represented a unique approach in terms of how humanitarian policy can be adapted in times of internal war. It was the humanitarian programme that sought to help internally displaced and war-affected civilians in an ongoing conflict within a sovereign country, as opposed to refugees beyond its borders, and established a precedent for many humanitarian programmes that followed. The various agreements and arrangements defining OLS cooperation with the parties, including the OLS modus operandi, though in practice often subject to reinterpretation by the parties, in particular the Government of the Sudan, have been preserved as a framework for policy and operational issues. This has permitted OLS to evolve over the years from a short-term relief programme to the most far-reaching and diversified international assistance effort in the Sudan. In successive reports to the General Assembly on emergency assistance to the Sudan and in the corresponding Assembly resolutions the contribution of the Government of the Sudan in this regard has been acknowledged.

93. The tragic civil war in the Sudan, which began four decades ago and, with the exception of the period of relative calm between 1972 and 1983, has continued unabated, remains a crisis of immense proportions, which has affected the lives of millions of Sudanese. Under such circumstances, any attempt to diminish the capacity of the international community to respond to conditions of suffering and hardship among the civilian population in the Sudan can only give rise to the most adamant expressions of concern as a violation of recognized humanitarian principles, most importantly, the right of civilian populations to receive humanitarian assistance in times of war.

94. To further the purpose of humanitarian assistance efforts conducted by OLS, the Secretary-General in previous reports called upon the parties to continue and, where necessary, to improve upon their cooperation with the United Nations. The General Assembly has also urged the parties to assure safe access for persons providing relief assistance to all in need and to facilitate the movement of relief supplies and personnel, so as to guarantee the maximum success of OLS in all parts of the country.

95. On specific matters affecting OLS, the attention of the General Assembly is once again drawn to the various problem areas where, despite direct requests for cooperation to one or more of the parties, additional progress is required. These include the protection and security of relief personnel and convoys; clearance of OLS flights into southern Sudan; the extension of the March 1994 and May 1994 IGAD agreements on OLS humanitarian assistance into areas of cooperation left unaddressed by those agreements, such as modalities for the delivery of relief supplies involving cross-line convoys and access to conflict-affected areas, as well as the modalities for monitoring compliance with the relative principles and procedures; operational procedures for international non-governmental organizations based in Khartoum.

96. The restrictions imposed over the past year by the Government of the Sudan to limit OLS access to affected civilian populations have seriously disrupted planned relief operations. These actions are in contradiction to the Government of the Sudan's repeated commitments to the General Assembly to assist United Nations humanitarian efforts in the Sudan. Over the past year, events having a direct impact on OLS have prompted the Secretary-General to issue no less than

four separate public statements in which he called upon the concerned parties to take measures to redress the situation.

97. Arising in 1995 from OLS's growing difficulties on matters of access, the first comprehensive review of the Operation in its seven-year history was completed in mid-August 1996. This was made possible through donor support and the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan and rebel movements. Bearing in mind the global, regional and national significance of OLS, the review's findings and recommendations will be critically important in charting the future of humanitarian activities in the Sudan.